

“IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT THE WRITING”

KIERAN FENBY-HULSE, MICHELE WHITING,
TIM MIDDLETON, TRACY BRAIN

EFFECTIVE
PERSONAL AND
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
FOR CREATIVE
WRITING PHD
CANDIDATES

INTRODUCTION

This report draws on the findings of a small Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded project that examined the ambitions and professional development needs of creative writing doctoral researchers at Bath Spa University through a series of online surveys and video dialogues with both doctoral researchers and their supervisors. The aim of the research was to identify challenges and to highlight approaches that work well with a distinctive practice-led field.

Bath Spa University has a long history of supporting engaged research which impacts beyond academia. The University's Graduate School supports a growing community of PhD students from a wide range of countries who work across a range of arts, humanities and social science fields. We have a concentration of candidates undertaking practice-based work in the fields of Art & Design, Music and Creative Writing. PhD students at Bath Spa are "dual citizens" – working closely with their subject community in our academic Schools to share work in progress but also working within the Graduate School, in a multi-disciplinary environment, to address a wide range of professional and personal development needs.

Creative Writing sees our largest number of PGR enrolments, with some students opting to remain at Bath Spa after taking one of our highly vocational MAs in Creative Writing and with some joining us from MFA programmes in the USA. What all candidates have in common is a high level of professional achievement – with many coming to us to write will be their second or third novel for a leading publisher. Our students may have already won prizes for their work and, in some case, act as judges on leading literary prize panels.

The Creative Writing PhD is offered in three modes of study (full time, part time and via low-residency with on-line learning). In the academic year 2014-15, we had 38 students enrolled on our PhDs in Creative writing: 11 Full Time (28%), 16 Part-Time (42%), and 11 Low Residency (29%). The age range is 27-64, with an average age of 46 and a median age of 47. In terms of gender, 29 students are female and 9 are male. The students are mainly self-funding, though we continue to recruit students funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) via our partnership in the South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (SWWDTP).

The overarching aim of this report is to put forward a series of recommendations for supporting practice-led PhDs. From the start of the research, a multi layered and overtly experiential approach was undertaken in order to critically investigate issues arising from undertaking a creative practice doctorate. As such, the project examined a range of data including:

- an online survey sent to all creative writing doctoral researchers;
- a series of in-depth semi-structured video dialogues with doctoral researchers and supervisors;
- a follow-up survey sent to creative writing supervisors;
- a review of policy documents pertaining to doctoral degrees and training;
- an analysis of the results of the 2013 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey;
- an analysis of Vitae's report on career ambitions and career destinations, and the results of Vitae's research leaders survey;
- an assessment of Vitae's Researcher Development Framework in terms of creative practice research.

Drawing on the findings of the above investigations, this project provides some key insights into the development needs of creative writing doctoral researchers. One of the main project outcomes is an online video series that highlights the views of both creative writing doctoral researchers and supervisors on issues such as career ambition, skills development, professional and academic values, and audiences, as well as some sample footage from the Creative Writing PhD Forum.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report draws on a small-scale study of the perceptions of doctoral candidates in our creative writing PhD and their supervisors about the role of training and development in their PhD programme at Bath Spa University. Through a combination of online surveys and semi-structured interviews with doctoral researchers and their supervisors, the project examines the many reasons people undertake a creative writing PhD and the role the PhD is thought to play in their continuing professional development. Given the small and focused nature of the study, our aim was not to identify general trends from the data, but to understand the individual experiences of our doctoral researchers and how they relate to the findings pertaining to career ambitions and student experience detailed in the aforementioned Vitae and HEA reports. The report puts forward a number of recommendations, which are detailed below.

The videos of conversations with PhD candidates and their supervisors, as well as extracts from workshops, are available online at – URL: <http://thehub.bathspa.ac.uk/services/research-and-graduate-affairs/research-projects>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To refer to PhD students as professional researchers. This broadens the scope of the PhD so it is not understood in terms of solely academic training.
- To take an honest approach to recruitment and provide realistic advice on career development so as to manage the expectations of doctoral researchers and help them plan effectively for the future.
- To ensure doctoral researchers are aware of the changing higher education landscape and the policy context in which their doctoral studies are located.
- To develop a suite of career case studies that highlights the varied career paths that creative arts PhD graduates have taken.
- To offer training on portfolio careers and entrepreneurship within the arts sector, providing specialist advice on the nature of the creative industries and how to make the most out of your practice.

- To offer internships as part of the PhD experience. This would enable candidates to think about their research in a wider context and to identify moments of synergy between commercial and sector needs and their research skills and interests.
- To build connections with industry that explore that explore and articulate the wider benefits of creative arts research. This could be done through experimental research projects, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), as well as through consultancy. This would provide an evidence base for future collaborations and, perhaps, open up new job opportunities for highly qualified creative arts postgraduates.
- To provide bespoke workshops for creative practice researchers that address notions of method and methodology and also the broader policy context in which creative practice is located.
- To allocate time for supervisors and researchers to discuss not only career goals, but professional development needs, identifying skills that need to be acquired and/or honed.
- For supervisors to work closely with researcher developers and careers advisors so that comprehensive advice is given to doctoral researchers at all stages of the PhD.
- To create best practice examples of how the researcher development framework can support creative practice research
- To hold workshops that openly discuss the language of the framework to increase understanding
- To ensure supervisors are familiar with the framework and use it when discussing professional development.
- To offer specialist support and one-on-one session to allow researchers to familiarise themselves with the framework and adapt it to their own situation and needs.

Creative Writing is still a relatively new discipline within Higher Education, the UK's first PhD in Creative Writing awarded by the University of East Anglia in 1990. A PhD in creative practice research (also referred to as practice-led research, practice-based research, research-led practice, and artistic research) involves the submission of a creative work and (usually) an accompanying contextual statement or exegesis that situates the work in a broader research context. More broadly, Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean have argued that terms such as creative practice research and practice-led research are:

[E]mployed to make two arguments about practice which are often overlapping and interlinked: firstly...that creative work in itself is a form of research and generated detectable research outputs; secondly, to suggest that creative practice – the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art – can lead to specialised research insights which can then be generalised and written up as research' (Smith and Dean 2009; 5).

Occupying a liminal position between the arts and the sciences, creative practice research appears to fuse the critical and theoretical reflection of humanities research with the practical exploration often attributed to the physical and social sciences. Moreover, it is a degree, which is professionally orientated: whether the candidate is a poet, novelist or playwright, the arts and cultural sector are often involved (to a greater or lesser extent) in the research process. Creative writers, for instance, are keenly aware of the demands, needs, and wants of publishers and producers, as well as the requirements of funders and interests of arts audiences. As stated in a report published by the Higher Education Academy on practice as research, practitioners are not simply in dialogue with the professional community, but part of that community (Boyce-Tillman et al. 2012). In short, the Creative Writing PhD offers a doctoral experience that differs significantly from that of a humanities PhD. It is inherently outward facing, professionally directed, and generates what Estelle Barrett has termed 'personally situated knowledge', knowledge that challenges more traditional understandings of academic rigour (Barrett and Bolt 2010; 2). As such, creative writing PhD programmes provides particularly fertile ground in which to rethink and re-evaluate what might constitute appropriate training and professional development.

In the last 15 years, the PhD has become a matter of global policy concern (Park 2007 and Crossouard 2013), governments, educational bodies, and research councils seeking to bring research degrees and the knowledge economy into closer alignment. In a 2010 report by the League for European Research Universities, the modern doctorate is said to be 'determined by an interplay between professional research experience and personal development, the most important outcome of which is an individual trained to have a unique set of high level skills' (LERU 2010; 3). This focus on skills development is echoed in a 2012 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which describes the need for transferable skills training in more overtly economic terms:

Researchers' competencies are directly related to the effectiveness of investment in research and development (R&D) for boosting innovative capability and prosperity, not only at firm level but also at regional and national levels. Public expenditures on researcher training and support are therefore significant in many countries; private expenditures can also be considerable. It is important that these investments in researchers' training and careers yield commensurate benefits for their economies and their firms (OECD 2012; 16).

This skills-push and need for 'industry-readiness' (Manathunga, Pitt and Critchley; 2009) has also been discussed in national fora, and by a diverse range of different stakeholders. The Australian Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, for instance, states that Australia's 'research graduates have the skills and attributes to both engage in world-class research and make productive contributions in a wide spectrum of professional roles (Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, 2011; 11). A report by the US Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service recommends that graduate education leaders should 'broaden the development of professional skills to include communications, teamwork, creativity, presentation skills, oral communication, writing skills, analysis and synthesis of data, and planning and organization for graduate students, particularly doctoral students' (Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service 2012; 32). And here in the UK, the Arts and Humanities Research Council have said that doctoral researchers should have the opportunity to 'develop the skills and experience necessary to succeed in doctoral research and have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills within and outside the academy' (Arts and Humanities Research Council 2013; 18).

These reports demonstrate a global interest by governments and research and educational organisations in harnessing the skills of doctoral researcher for industry and ensuring that doctoral researchers from all disciplines have a variety of career paths available to them. While these reports are no doubt couched in knowledge economy rhetoric, they do seem to align with the findings of a number of projects that have sought to better understand the experiences and career destinations of doctoral researchers. As highlighted in the 2013 *Postgraduate Research Experience Survey*, there is a growing demand and need for professional development and transferable skills training, particularly within the arts and humanities. [12]. According to the survey, while 56% of health science students and 54% of STEM students 'are more likely to say they have received training to develop transferable skills' than respondents from the social sciences (39%) and arts and humanities (37%) (Higher Education Academy 2013; 5).

Vitae's works on career ambitions and destinations adds an additional nuance to the HEA data. In their report *What do researchers want to do? The career intentions of doctoral researchers* (2012), they note that: 'only in biomedical science and engineering and technology were significant proportions of respondents (over 30%) anticipating careers outside research, although mostly in occupations and sectors which they saw as related to their research disciplines' (2). By contrast, three quarters of respondents from the arts and humanities (and over half in the social science or education) sought a higher education career. However, as reported by Vitae in their 2013 report on early career progression of doctoral graduates, data from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Longitudinal Survey shows that in 2008 only 57.5% of those with arts and humanities PhDs were working in a higher education research or teaching position and by 2010 that figure had decreased to 46.2% (Vitae 2013; 13). The Vitae report also highlights worryingly that when compared with other disciplines 'a significantly lower proportion of arts and humanities respondents (59%) were in full-time work' and that 40% of arts and humanities respondents, and a quarter overall, 'who were engaged in portfolio working did so because they could not find a full-time position in their preferred employment' (Vitae 2013; 7). It seems that career plans for Arts and Humanities postgraduates are more aspirational and less pragmatic, especially when considering academic career paths and the job market.

Research on career pathways for undergraduates working in the creative arts suggests there is potential for postgraduates to obtain employment outside of academia and to continue to draw upon

their subject knowledge and research expertise. According to a report by UK Trade and Investment (UKTI):

From film to fashion, games to software, music to media, advertising to architecture, the UK's £71 billion creative sector is one of the UK's most important industries, driving economic growth and supporting jobs across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The value of the sector increased by 15.6 percent between 2008 and 2012, compared with an increase of 5.4 percent for the UK economy as a whole. It is estimated that in 2012 the sector generated over £8 million an hour and employed nearly 1.7 million people (UKTI 2014; 2).

This is supported by the findings of the Creative Graduates Creative Futures Higher Education Partnership, which reports that 3 out of 4 creative arts graduates have worked in the creative industries and that 'the vast majority of graduates engage in work and employment that is creative and closely related to their field of expertise or course of study. They place a high value on their higher education experiences, although they would have liked a stronger connection with the professional world on their courses' (Creative Graduates Creative Futures 2010; 4). While these experiences might not map on directly to those undertaking doctoral study, this does seem to be an area worth exploring. As Yvon Bonenfant has argued: 'as a research paradigm, PaR [practice as research] is pregnant with radical and fecund potential in societies that increasingly rely on 'creatives' for economic and social growth, ecological transformation and regeneration, because of PaR's ability to integrate logics that are other than linear, embodied activity, and creative unpredictability within one field' (Boyce-Tillman et. al. 2012; 21).

Indeed, many of our creative practice researchers would already see themselves as freelancers and/or sole traders working with the creative sector. Within the Crafts Sector, there is already a close relationship between art and enterprise. As Karen Yair states in a 2012 Crafts Council report, craft is inherently an entrepreneurial sector, with 88% of all makers having set up their own business and with a further 6% in business partnerships (Yair 2012; 1). Highlighting the balance between creative fulfilment and income generation, the report shows how a large proportion of makers with higher degrees in particular have gone on to contribute to a range of manufacturing industries. As Yair states, 'makers can support companies transformation from commodity producers to knowledge-based companies trading on creativity and problem-solving capabilities' (Yair 2012; 1). Evidence is still

needed, however, on other forms of creative practice and the potential synergy between creative arts doctorates and the creative industries

Our small-scale pilot study probes some of these issues further, situating the discussion within the specific context of the creative writing PhD. By drawing on the perceptions of doctoral researchers and supervisors, this project provides a nuanced understanding of career motivations and professional development needs of creative writing researchers at Bath Spa University. Through a combination of online surveys and semi-structured interviews with doctoral researchers and their supervisors, the project examines the many reasons people undertake a creative writing PhD and the role the PhD is thought to play in their continuing professional development.

METHODOLOGY

This report examines the ambitions and professional development needs of creative writing doctoral researchers at Bath Spa University through a series of online surveys and video dialogues with both doctoral researchers and their supervisors. We were particularly interested in exploring the extent to which the findings and recommendations of the aforementioned reports apply to doctoral researchers in creative writing, especially since these researchers often undertake their doctorate part time and at a later stage in their career. The findings are discussed in relation to current provision at Bath Spa University and opportunities (and challenges) highlighted for developing a suite of personal and professional development tools and training courses that can be used to support researchers with different backgrounds and with various levels and types of expertise.

From the start of the project, a multi layered and overtly experiential qualitative approach was taken. This allowed us to gather a diverse range of responses (both written and spoken) and to explore some responses in depth and in dialogue. This iterative approach enabled us to critically investigate issues that arise from undertaking a creative practice doctorate in particular. As Peter Dallow has noted, across 'arts' disciplines, a practice-based approach to research in the creative arts does not progress in a linear fashion, 'it gets deflected because it aims to be unpredictable in relation to reigning norms' (Dallow 2003; 50). He hints here at the less tangible processes and types of knowledge within creative practice research, where the researcher experiences the condition of being 'in' the research. He describes it as 'a threshold between conscious thought and unconscious feeling' developing this thought further through aligning theory to rationality and irrationality to experience, emotion and art (Dallow 2003; 49).

The project acknowledges this complex combination of tacit, practical and theoretical knowledge that is generated by creative practice research, as well as the two types of PhD candidates identified by Rugg and Petre: the one that is "PhD ready" with a clear understanding of career pathways, university procedures and projects milestones and the other that goes through a process of becoming, less knowing and more confused and (Rugg G, Petre M, 2005). The responses to the online survey suggest both types of creative writing doctoral researchers exist, at each end and across the spectrum. Indeed, responses were frequently reflective of the researcher's particular stage of development as well as their chosen pathway of study.

Rugg and Petre have also noted that doctoral researchers are often overly focused on the PhD at the expense of career development, with many doctoral researchers 'too embarrassed' to talk openly about continuing professional development. (Rugg G, Petre M, 2005). Throughout the project we have kept this at the forefront of our mind, encouraging respondents to discuss their lived experience in their own terms through the use of open questions and by taking a semi-structured approach to the video dialogues. Beryl Graham's notion of the *willing participant* (Graham 2006) has also influenced the research process, which in the context of this selective and small-scale study is particularly apt, as it applies not just to the situated video dialogues, questionnaires and conversations of the researchers and professors, but also to the intellectual participation and willingness to reflect on professional and personal development.

Given the small and focused nature of the study, our aim was not to identify general trends from the data, but to understand the individual experiences of our doctoral researchers and how they relate to the findings pertaining to career ambitions and student experience detailed in the aforementioned Vitae and HEA reports. Doris von Drathen's *Vortex of Silence* provided the conceptual frame for this approach. According to von Drathen, artworks present their own 'intrinsic universes' that unfold in and of themselves. As such, we wanted to ensure that individual voices were heard as well as highlighting any discrepancies or tensions between these voices. The video dialogues proved interesting in this respect, the editing process allowing us to thematically group responses and to underline moments of congruence and incongruence between both doctoral researchers and their supervisors.

THE ONLINE SURVEY

The first stage of the research process involved sending an online survey to our current creative writing doctoral researchers (33), which generated 18 responses. Consisting of five sections, the survey began with general questions about motivations, interests, and creative development before moving to more directed questions about professional development. As part of the survey we chose to specifically address current perceptions of and attitudes to Vitae's Researcher Development Framework (RDF). Vitae are a UK-based organisation dedicated to realising the potential of researchers through transforming their professional and career development. Their Researcher Development Framework (RDF) articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and seeks to encourage researchers to aspire to excellence through engagement with

development activities and reflection. The framework identifies four core areas for development: knowledge and intellectual abilities, personal effectiveness, research governance and organisation, and engagement, influence and impact. The framework has been cited as a model of good practice by Research Councils UK (RCUK), the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the European Commission. As such, we felt it was worth exploring this framework in detail, especially since creative practice research challenges traditional notions of what constitutes a research process.

As Dallow notes, in order to investigate art practice it is necessary to understand the ‘doing’ of it, for the ‘challenge for the contemporary artist also operating as a researcher is to attempt to represent or chart this activity, whilst remaining open to the possibilities present in their art practice (Dallow 2003; 50). The survey sought to address this aspect of the research by examining the various insights that researchers had obtained during their particular phases of study from creative, professional and personal perspectives. For example, question 8 asked: How do you think that Creative Practice PhD research will help with your own creative development’ And in order to encourage participants to give their fullest answer, the question was slightly rephrased and asked: How do you think that Creative Practice PhD research will impact on your creative process? Other questions sought to gain insights into the way in which researchers dealt with the varying demands of research. For example, questions included: Do you consider yourself to be resilient? And: How do you deal with adversity? The questions also sought to elicit information on their understanding of arts-based PhDs within the wider professional sector. The final section of the survey examined their understanding of Vitae’s Researcher Development Framework, the survey encouraging responses in particular on its strengths and weaknesses for creative practice researchers. Participants had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the planner in advance through online materials and workshops. Data was captured on the year and mode of study. Overall, the 28 questions were constructed to obtain a broad overview of the experiences of creative writing doctoral study from outside influences to internal structures as well as capture more specific and reflective responses to the Researcher Development Framework. The survey is provided as an appendix.

THE VIDEO DIALOGUES

Through an analysis of the survey results we were able to identify common themes as well as potential gaps in knowledge. The video dialogues were used to explore these gaps and resonances

further, through a series of semi-structured questions that would take the final form of an edited collection of conversations between candidates and professors. Notes and video recordings took place, each interview lasting approximately an hour. The survey results were collated. Moments of congruence and incongruence were identified and a set of further questions were developed that could potentially elicit more detailed responses and a deeper, holistic understanding of the creative writing PhD. Volunteers were sought and five one-hour interviews were scheduled (although one was cancelled). The questions for the video dialogue followed a similar format to the online survey, but sought to draw out more detailed responses. Respondents were either in their first or second year (or part-time equivalent). In total, 20 questions were asked.

Responses were then collated and similarities, correlations, overlaps and gaps identified. Through a reflective process of re-looking and re-experiencing the conversation, we then began to construct a dialogue which would articulate the concerns of creative practice researchers and highlight the various issues that PhD candidates face. By placing comments alongside each other in the final footage, tensions are not erased but highlighted. The interview questions are provided as an appendix.

SUPERVISOR PERSPECTIVE

A series of video interviews with current Bath Spa University doctoral supervisors were also undertaken with the aim of capturing best-practice and advice through a series of semi-structured interview that explored perspectives on employability, personal and professional development, and training and support. The semi-structured interview contained 6 questions. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. The complementary yet diverse ranges of responses captured merited further exploration, so an online survey based upon 5 concise questions was designed and sent to all creative writing doctoral supervisors, generating 10 responses. The survey and video footage were then analysed in relation to the responses of the doctoral researchers to identify any areas in which student and supervisory perceptions of the PhD differed or coalesced. The video footage was then edited into the video dialogues discussed above to give both depth and an alternative perspective on the themes already identified. The surveys and interview questions are provided as appendices.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The research's emergent construction allowed for a step-by-step analysis of and reflection on the various responses. Given the small-scale nature of this study and the internal, institutional focus, it is not possible to draw general trends about creative writing doctoral study. The data, however, can be used to better understand individual experiences and whether these align with the findings and recommendations of the aforementioned policy documents and reports. The discussion below is supplemented by a series of video dialogues that explore these issues in more detail. These dialogues are available online and can be found on our website: thehub.bathspa.ac.uk/services/research-and-graduate-affairs/research-projects

AMIBITIONS

The first section of the online survey focused on careers the motivation for undertaking a PhD. Of the 17 respondents, 5 mentioned obtaining an academic career as their prime motivation for undertaking a PhD. 14 respondents, however, said they were driven by their interest in the subject matter and their desire to refine their creative practice, with 1 respondent stating that the PhD enabled them to undertake a creative experiment that they wouldn't attempted without guidance and supervision. Intriguingly, when asked directly whether they would like to pursue a career in Higher Education, while 2 respondents said they saw themselves as a writer rather than an academic, 11 said it was something they were pursuing or considering. The responses are interesting as they highlight the close relationship between the creative writing PhD and the professional writing industry.

"I wanted a boost with my creative work! I felt that my creative writing needed a shove forward, and a PhD would help me refine my thinking and writing"

Doctoral Researcher

Indeed, it seems that these researchers do not readily distinguish between the two spheres. As our students are predominantly part time and usually have at least one successful commercial publication behind them, their professional profile is taken into account during the admissions process. It is, therefore, no surprise that they don't see the two as independent sectors.

"So I can have a career beyond just writing books, which is no longer a way to make a living"

Doctoral Researcher

Further nuance was obtained during the video dialogues, which highlight the way in which the PhD is understood as providing a more stable career trajectory. Three of four interviewees, for instance, expressed a desire to work within academia or lecture within a University. When we explored this issue further, it became clear that they felt it was not possible to ‘make a living’

“To be a better writer, and to become better at critical reflection in order to examine my own processes and the processes of other writers”

Doctoral Researcher

solely as a published writer and thought higher education a more stable alternative, either full time or as part of a portfolio career. The PhD was seen as essential in this respect.

Interestingly in both video interview and survey responses, most mentioned the desire to ‘teach’, rather than to obtain a lectureship or research position, possibly demonstrating a lack of understanding of positions within Higher Education. This is perhaps a result of the way in which careers within Higher Education are commonly discussed within the media and a rather narrow view of what a lectureship involves. This suggests there is a need to start talking about PhD candidates as professional researchers, rather than as early career academics. The term ‘academic’ is problematic in that it can have a detrimental effect on the way in which people think about future career paths and what might be considered ‘suitable’ or relevant. By employing the term professional researcher instead, there is an opportunity to rethink the way in which research, research degrees and higher education are described and discussed. This would, hopefully, remove some of the stigma surrounding those who opt for non-lecturing positions or careers outside of higher education. By valuing research as a professional skill that is applicable in a wide range of sectors, the value of both the academy and research becomes much clearer and career routes for researchers more varied and permeable.

The problem, according to the Council of Graduate Schools and Education Testing Service (2012), is particularly problematic in the arts and humanities where students are more strongly directed toward faculty careers. Indeed, as Anthony T Grafton and Jim Grossman of the American Historical Society observe:

We tell students that there are “alternatives” to academic careers. We warn them to develop a “plan B” in case they do not find a teaching post. And the very words in which we couch this useful advice makes clear how much we hope they will not have to follow it - and suggest, to many of them, that if they do have to settle for employment outside the

academy, they should crawl off home and gnaw their arms off (Grafton and Grossman, 2011).

There is clearly a need for greater fluidity and mobility between the academic and professional sectors as well as a need for supervisors to understand the range of opportunities available. The first change needed is a linguistic one. The second involves an honest and transparent approach to recruitment and realistic advice on career development so as to manage the expectations of doctoral researchers and help them plan effectively for the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To refer to PhD students as professional researchers. This broadens the scope of the PhD so it is not understood in terms of solely academic training.
- To take an honest approach to recruitment and provide realistic advice on career development so as to manage the expectations of doctoral researchers and help them plan effectively for the future.
- To ensure doctoral researchers are aware of the changing higher education landscape and the policy context in which their doctoral studies are located.
- To develop a suite of career case studies that highlights the varied career paths that creative arts PhD graduates have taken.

CAREERS

While a more transparent approach to recruitment provides candidates with a more realistic insight into future careers, it does actually address the important matter that these creative writers want to place their creative practice at the heart of what they do, an observation also made of creative arts

undergraduates in the Creative Graduates Creative Futures report (2010; 11).

When asked about the connection between their PhD and the wider professional sector, it was clear that the PhD candidates

"I hope it can indicate that creativity and academia can be good bedfellows, one stimulating the other, opening new vistas in each"

Doctoral Researcher

"Beyond research skills, I'm not sure it's particularly applicable to anything else"

Doctoral Researcher

“There’s never been a more important time for creative writers to analyse the potential of the changing face of communications, publishing and digital culture”

Doctoral Researcher

did not perceive their PhD to be of any value, even within the publication industry. As one respondent noted: “my agent and editors were surprised that I was going to do this...they didn’t know you could do one’. For those working in the area of digital writing, there was a strong feeling that there was a connection between their PhD and the creative industries, although they found it difficult to articulate and demonstrate

the contribution of their PhD or how the PhD process would make PhD would make them a particularly desirable employee.

Portfolio careers were also discussed, both directly and indirectly and this is indicative of clear understanding of the varied activities that are needed to be able to sustain a vibrant creative practice career in today’s saturated market. This way forward was not further ‘unpacked’ for the purposes of this project, but remains a key indicator and one that could be further progressed in terms of developing innovative professional support and training.

Further research is needed in this area of postdoctoral employability within the arts and humanities, particularly with regard to career destinations and opportunities for developing careers that draw on subject knowledge and expertise. As the aforementioned US Report on postgraduate careers states: while ‘it is critical to illuminate the pathways from graduate school into careers’ there is a ‘lack of sufficient data for individuals who earn degrees outside of science and engineering fields’ (Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service 2012; 4).

Of particular interest would be a study that explores ways in which creative practitioners can engage with industry. This would give visibility to industry-related creative work and potentially open up new career (and research) pathways. As the Arts Council England’s latest report on the evidence base for the value of the arts and culture states:

In some areas, such as the environment and sustainability, and science and technology, we have a general lack of suitable research – yet these are areas in which our own experience

“To learn to write is to learn to think; about oneself and about others. The holder of a creative writing PhD has developed skills of engagement with text – ever more vital in the digital world – of engagement with self through reflection and interrogation, and of engagement with others in the deepest way”

Doctoral Supervisor

and common sense tell us that the arts play an essential educational and communication role (ACE, 2014; 5).

There does seem potential, but as yet these avenues remain relatively unexplored. In the video dialogues, Professor Kate Pullinger and Professor Fay Weldon effectively highlight the potential for creative writers. For Pullinger, digital writing provides new ways in which to think about how we use technology and what technology can be used for. For Weldon, creative writing provides the doctoral researcher with a deep understanding of empathy and audience, which, if adopted by industry, could have significant implications for the way in which businesses communicate and interact. While evidence of is lacking, there is potential for further research on these issues. As Elizabeth Bullen, Simon Robb and Jane Kenway note, though, this will require arts and humanities researchers (and indeed supervisors) to engage with issues such as: ‘how are critical and disciplinary values to be reconciled with market values, the notion of the public intellectual with the entrepreneur, intellectual freedom with intellectual property, the past with the future, tradition with innovation?’ (Bullen, Robb and Kenway 2011; 14).

RECOMMENDATION

- To offer training on portfolio careers and entrepreneurship within the arts sector, providing specialist advice on the nature of the creative industries and how to make the most out of your practice.
- To offer internships as part of the PhD experience. This would enable candidates to think about their research in a wider context and to identify moments of synergy between commercial and sector needs and their research skills and interests.
- To build connections with industry that explore that explore and articulate the wider benefits of creative arts research. This could be done through experimental research projects, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), as well as through consultancy. This would provide an evidence base for future collaborations and, perhaps, open up new job opportunities for highly qualified creative arts postgraduates.

SKILLS

The third section of the survey centred on doctoral researchers understanding of their personal, creative, and professional development. When asked specifically about how the PhD will help with their creative development, responses focused upon the deep reflection that results from an intensive research process as well as the importance of networking, institutional support and the feedback from their supervisory team. Supervisor responses to the question of how a creative writing PhD can contribute to a writer's development closely aligned with those of the doctoral candidates, the PhD was thought to help enhance the writing process as well as provide an opportunity for sustained critical feedback.

"The research allows me to think deeply and carefully about the form I'm taking in my creative practice"

Doctoral Researcher

"The careful study, the feedback from my tutors, the interaction with my peers have all helped me think more carefully about my writing"

Doctoral Researcher

Within regards to research methods, there was a noticeable nervousness around notions of methods and methodologies. This nervousness is fairly common in creative practice research, given its fairly recent emergence as a mode of research practice and its exploration of new types of knowledge. For Kelly Ritter, this is nervousness about research is accentuated by the fact that 'creative writers are

"I'm enjoying reading, thinking, and writing but still feel uncertain about the academic context"

Doctoral Researcher

perhaps one of the most *invisible* groups within the academy and certainly the most invisible in English studies, as they suffer from a collective anti-academic identity, one that carries with it frequent exclusion from the regular theoretical, pedagogical training that other doctoral disciplines might automatically seek to provide' (Ritter 2001; 2101). Although creative writing courses and creative

writing research have both increased in prominence in the last 10-15 years, training on creative practice methods and methodologies remains crucial at PhD level. This is best achieved through a combination of subject level and interdisciplinary discussions. The interdisciplinary discussions provide creative practitioners with an opportunity to expand their methodological comfort zone and explore new ideas and strategies, whilst subject specific discussions are used to see how they might be applied back within their own creative practice context.

When asked to identify more general skills which could be acquired during a PhD, researcher struggled to articulate both the types of skills they might like to acquire and those that they have acquired. The findings here align closely with the report by the League of European Research Universities that states ‘doctoral graduate are best known for their analytical power and technical expertise which they have learnt to apply rigorously. However, the range of skills they develop is much wider. This is often not immediately recognised by the graduates themselves’ (LERU 2010; 6). The responses given by supervisors, while focused more on writerly skills, also highlighted a range of professional skills not discussed by the doctoral researchers. These included: independent thinking, articulate speech, critical thinking, audience-responsiveness, self-awareness, leadership, cultural understanding, empathy, creative strategies, critical language, perseverance, analysis, project management, and the presentation of complex ideas in a clear and coherent manner. Similarly, when asked what the creative writing PhD had to offer the wider professional sector, responses were more wide ranging, suggesting a possible disconnect between supervisor’s and doctoral candidate’s understanding of what has been referred to as ‘doctorateness’ (Trafford and Lesham; 2009).

“Presentation skills – how to talk confidently and interestingly about your work in high pressured situations, [and] how to pitch and promote your work in various contexts”

Doctoral Supervisor

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To provide bespoke workshops for creative practice researchers that address notions of method and methodology and also the broader policy context in which creative practice is located.
- To allocate time for supervisors and researchers to discuss not only career goals, but professional development needs, identifying skills that need to be acquired and/or honed.
- For supervisors to work closely with researcher developers and careers advisors so that comprehensive advice is given to doctoral researchers at all stages of the PhD.

FRAMEWORKS

The final section of the survey focused on Vitae’s Researcher Development Framework. Whilst most respondents erred on the side of positivity, others struggled to connect the framework to either their creative practice or their career trajectory. For one respondent, the framework seemed useful for

personal development, but felt it needed “buy in” and to be taken seriously by academic institutions and employers. For others, it did not seem to account for previous work experience or include all the skills necessary to undertake creative practice research. And for some, it proved to be overly complicated and daunting.

“Anything general is going to be difficult at first for specific topics, but I am sure it could be useful.”

Doctoral Researcher

“I definitely think it would be useful to me to think about the skills sets I may have, [though] I’m not too concerned about career planning”

Doctoral Researcher

The responses highlight how doctoral candidates understand their research processes and personal development plans as idiosyncratic, this aligning closely with Barbara Crossouard’s study of doctoral training which highlighted the circumspection frequently attributed to generic skills and skills training (Crossouard 2013). The responses suggest there is a clear need for development work to be undertaken to make the framework more ‘attractive’ to creative practice researchers. Given that most respondents thought the ‘tool’ had potential, couching the framework in more suitable language and providing examples of how it can be used within a creative practice context might prove useful. While respondents seemed to want a less structured approach, it is

not yet clear whether this is useful when thinking about professional development and it may be that a more nuanced approach to professional skills development is needed that sees the skills as part of the process, rather than an unnecessary add-on service.

Feedback from subsequent interdisciplinary workshops on the RDF held at Bath Spa University suggest that an open discussion on the framework and an exploration of the range of ways in which it can be used within and across disciplines can breakdown the notion inherent in the responses that creative practice research is somehow ‘different’. Indeed, over this course of this twelve month project, it has become clear that doctoral researchers need guidance and support when using the

“The exploration of the RDF framework has helped to begin a process of gaining a clearer understanding of where I am and where I might develop knowledge and skills”

Member of academic staff at Bath Spa University

RDF from both supervisors and experienced researcher developers. They need assistance with navigating the framework, locating it within their discipline, and in understanding the relationship between their development as a researcher and their previous knowledge and work experiences.

RECOMMENDATION

- To create best practice examples of how the researcher development framework can support creative practice research
- To hold workshops that openly discuss the language of the framework to increase understanding
- To ensure supervisors are familiar with the framework and use it when discussing professional development.
- To offer specialist support and one-on-one session to allow researchers to familiarise themselves with the framework and adapt it to their own situation and needs.

CONCLUSION

Almost all universities in the UK offer researcher development or professional skills training programmes. With changes to the academic job market and the global economy, though, these programmes need to be revisited to ensure that they cater for and support the diverse range of researchers currently undertaking doctoral study. This is, perhaps, even more important within the arts and humanities where the expectations of academic careers are much higher and where doctoral researchers are often studying part time and have a wealth of professional experience behind them. As Park notes, the danger inherent in current policy discussions is that doctoral research becomes the third tier in a linear development model that begins with a bachelor's degree. This would disregard the needs of a large number of students that return to study later in their careers and undermine the effect undertaking a PhD mid-career can have on the economy.

At Bath Spa University, the researcher development programme actively encourages all doctoral researchers to engage with the researcher development framework so that they can build (or extend) a professional development plan to suits their needs. The programme brings together the graduate school, research office, careers teams, subject librarians and supervisors and aims to push the boundaries of the doctorate, taking it beyond the walls of the department and drawing in perspectives from outside of the university. Although there is still much work to do, we aim to bridge the gap between research expertise, skills and the professional sector and are enabling our creative writing doctoral researchers to engage with industry professionals (such as agents, editors, national organisations, or those working with the creative industries) through forums, reading groups, resources, and events as well as through an emerging internship programme.

The PhD in Creative Writing Forum is one example of the approach being taken at Bath Spa University. It meets for three hours each month and is convened by the programme leader. The forum evolves in response to students' needs and requests, and provides subject specialist training and support, as well as developing the sense of community that is so important to students. Students undertaking the PhD via the full time Low Residency route participate in the forum by video link. One constant in every forum is that time is always available for detailed discussion of the students' own creative and critical work. It is a space where PhD students know they can always get expert feedback on their work in progress, whatever stage the work may be at, whether the very first draft of chapter one or an

abstract for a thesis that is about to be submitted. The feedback is delivered by a high level writing workshop. It is also a place where students are able to meet distinguished guests, whether fellow writers or industry professionals. The PhD forum allows students to raise questions and concern. At its heart is the belief that the PhD in Creative Writing gives great benefit to their professional and creative lives, and that these parts of their lives cannot be disentangled from their development as researchers. The forum develops students' ability to reflect on their own and one another's practice, to situate that practice in terms of key critical questions and problems, and to articulate where their work belongs in the ever-evolving canon. At a literary festival, we were struck by how well equipped our PhD students were when addressing questions and discussing their work - exceptionally better than their non-PhD counterparts. This forum is supplemented by interdisciplinary workshops that explore: creative practice as research methodology, processes of evaluation and validation, as well as research design, project management, and career planning.

PhD study over 3-4 years develops new researchers and should not solely be seen as a process by which a body of 'new knowledge' is generated. While not necessarily the prime motivation for undertaking doctoral study, continuing professional development needs to be embedded into the PhD process. In a way, a focus on soft skills provision misses the point. To help doctoral candidates see the benefits of so-called soft-skills, they need to be contextualised and coupled with subject knowledge. Key to this will be acquiring a detailed and discipline specific understanding of the translational nature of the skill sets acquired during a doctorate and assisting doctoral researchers to connect their research to the professional and public sectors. Indeed, as Ortun Zuber-Skerritt and Eva Cendon have noted, skills training requires both reflection and application (Zuber-Skerritt and Cendon 2014). Researcher Development, then, needs to go beyond professional skills training session and provide opportunities for researchers to think through doing and to reflect on their experience. Creative practice as research already provides fertile ground for this professional experimentation, the arts sector playing a key role in the development and dissemination of creative arts research.

A 2011 UK Council for Graduate Education Report stated that the reason the professional doctorate emerged in the USA, UK, and Australia was to create a doctorate that met the needs of the knowledge economy (UKCEG 2011). While this statement is perhaps of no surprise, in the current climate we need to ask what the difference is between the professional doctorate and the PhD with embedded professional skills training. As noted earlier, creative practice research is rarely independent of the

feedback and peer review of the professional sector and is often in active dialogue with the wider professional sector. While there has been a tendency to clearly demarcate between professional and philosophical doctorates, it may now be worth exploring the space in-between, a space in which industry and sectorial 'problems' can be combined with philosophically-driven question.

To argue that skills need to be at the heart of the doctoral process, as bodies such as the European League for Research Universities have, in a way misses the mark (LERU 2010). On the one hand, it fails to address the personal motivations of those undertaking a PhD, particularly in the arts and humanities, many of whom remain self-funded. On the other hand, it fails to value the knowledge and expertise generated during the PhD process and the importance of introducing research to sectors in which research is not undertaken or not yet understood. As Michael A. Peters notes:

Today, there is a strong renewal of interest among politicians and policymakers worldwide in the related notions of creativity and innovation, especially in relation to terms such as “the creative economy”, “knowledge economy”, “enterprise society”, “entrepreneurship” and “national systems of innovation”. In its rawest form, the notion of the creative economy emerges from a set of claims that suggest that the industrial economy is giving way to the creative economy based on the growing power of ideas and virtual value – the turn from steel and hamburgers to software and intellectual property (Peters 2012; 13).

To engage doctoral researchers with professional development, doctoral programmes need to locate skills-based training within research cultures, areas of research expertise, and in these new and emerging ecologies and economies of knowledge. By providing a doctoral programme that offers a range of opportunities for applied, collaborative, interdisciplinary, immersive and reflective learning, doctoral researchers will have the opportunity to explore both their research interests and their professional skills through a range of different lenses and with a range of sectors. This has the effect of increasing not only their employability, but employer understanding of the value and nature of higher education research.

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APPENDIX ONE: ONLINE SURVEY SENT TO DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

ABOUT YOU

1. Are you a Full-Time, Part-Time, or Low-Res PhD Candidate
2. When year did you register?
3. How did you find out about the Bath Spa Creative Writing PhD?
4. If you have an MA, where did you undertake this?
5. What subject was your first degree in?

MOTIVATION

6. What was your impetus for embarking on a creative practice PhD? What do you hope to achieve?

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

7. How do you think that Creative Practice PhD research will help with your own creative development?
8. How do you think that Creative Practice PhD research will impact on your creative process?
9. In what ways do you engage with research methods and methodologies?
10. Why might documenting your practice be important for your PhD? How do you do this?
11. How do you view the relationship between the creative and critical parts of the thesis?
12. Looking to the future, can you see how completing a Creative Practice PhD may influence your creative outcomes?

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

13. Do you consider yourself to be a motivated, enthusiastic researcher and, if so, can you give an example of your practice?
14. Regarding the PhD process, do you consider yourself to be resilient? How do you deal with adversity?
15. Do you engage with your peer group? Are they within the school, the university, or more generally in the creative writing sector?
16. Do people come to you for advice pertaining to your PhD? Often? Occasionally? Never?

17. Do you have support structures outside of the university such as mentors or readers or research networks? Can you describe them briefly?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

18. How do you see your Creative Practice project in the broader context of academic research beyond the department/university?
19. Do you think that a Creative Practice PhD will help your knowledge of your chosen industry? If so, how?
20. Do you engage with opportunities that arise outside of the PhD context? If so could you briefly describe a scenario?
21. Do you seek to progress in an academic career? If so, what or where do you go for advice and direction?
22. Do you have a network that helps and supports you?
23. What does a creative writing PhD have to offer the wider professional sector? You may want to think about the arts, cultural, and creative sectors, the creative industries, and the technology and manufacturing industries.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Before answering the questions below, please watch this short video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwu1nnSh6bU>

For more details on the framework watch the above video. To access the framework follow this link:

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/introducing-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework-rdf-to-employers-2011.pdf>

24. To what extent do you think it is useful to think in terms of these broad skill sets?
25. Do you think this nationally agreed framework is useful for creative practice PhDs candidates?
26. How useful might this framework be for planning your (research?) career?
27. What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the framework?

FINAL QUESTION

28. If you could sum up the reason for doing a CW PhD in a single sentence, what would you say?

Details

1. Name:
2. Year/Stage:
3. Mode of Delivery:

Careers and Motivation

4. What was your motivation for undertaking a PhD?
5. What do you hope to achieve?
 - a. In terms of your practice?
 - b. In terms of your career?
6. What is the relationship between your PhD and your career ambitions?
7. Has your perception of the PhD and of your work changed since you started your PhD?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What effect?
8. What role do you think a Creative Practice PhD plays within the academy/HE?
 - a. Research/the REF?
 - b. Funding?
 - c. Teaching?
9. How is the CP PhD understood within publishing and writing industries?
 - a. How is it valued?
 - b. To what extent?
 - c. What are the perceived benefits/drawbacks?
10. What value do you think a CW PhD has for the wider professional sector?
 - a. Creative Industries?
 - b. Government eg. Policy?
 - c. Industry eg. Dyson? Retail?

Skills and Knowledge

11. What support do you think you need, specifically, to complete your PhD?
 - a. From your supervisor?

- b. From your peers?
 - c. Research training?
 - d. External bodies and people?
12. What skills do you think you have developed thus far?
13. What skills do you think you still need to develop?
14. How useful do you think the RDF Framework is to completing your PhD?
- a. Do you find it applicable to creative practice?
 - b. Are there any issues with the framework?
 - c. Do you currently use the framework? If so, how?
15. What types of knowledge do you think your PhD generates?
16. How do you record, document and critique the methods and techniques you employ?
- a. How does this inform and develop your practice?
 - b. How do you know your work is original?
 - c. Moments of transformation?
17. What role does interdisciplinary research play within your research and practice?
18. What role does the audience play in the development of your research?
19. What role does the publisher play in the development of your research?
20. If the PhD process were an animal, what sort of an animal would it be?

APPENDIX THREE: ONLINE SURVEY SENT TO DOCTORAL SUPERVISORS

1. How can a PhD enhance and contribute to a writer's development?
2. What personal/professional skills sets do you think a CW PhD provides you with?
3. What type of support and training can help a PhD candidate develop?
4. What might a creative writing PhD have to offer the wider professional sector?
5. What can be gained from undertaking a CW PhD?

APPENDIX FOUR: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR DOCTORAL SUPERVISORS

1. How can a PhD enhance and contribute to a writer's development?
 - a. creative development?
 - b. personal development?
 - c. professional development?
2. What personal/professional skills sets do you think a CW PhD provides you with?
 - a. as a creative writer?
 - b. as someone who works outside of creative writing?
3. What type of support and training can help a PhD candidate develop?
 - a. role of the supervisor?
 - b. role of the research culture?
 - c. role of a graduate school?
 - d. role of careers office?
 - e. role of the library?
 - f. role of the RDF?
4. The RDF identifies a suite of different skills set in four areas. Why is it valuable for CW PhDs to think about their personal and professional development needs using a nationally agreed framework?
 - a. How do you think these can help a writer develop?
 - b. How useful are the categories?
 - c. What categories are particularly useful for creative practitioners?
 - d. Focus: talk to a specific area of the framework.
5. What does a creative writing PhD have to offer the wider professional sector?
 - a. arts, cultural, creative sectors?

- b. creative industries?
 - c. industry, technology, manufacturing?
6. If you could sum up the reason for doing a CW PhD in a single sentence, what would you say?